

Group V: Article 19 – Freedom of expression



"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and Ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is not only important in its own right but is also essential if other human rights are to be achieved.

You have the right to hold your own opinions and to express them freely without government interference. This includes the right to express your views aloud or through:

- published articles, books or leaflets
- television or radio broadcasting
- works of art
- communication on the internet.

- Human rights defenders in many countries throughout the world have been subjected to death threats, arbitrary detention and torture and many have even been killed because of their human rights activism.
- Governments have historically used 'national security' as an excuse to stifle political opposition and criticism. In recent years, heightened fears about terrorism and security have been invoked to justify increased repression of individuals and groups exercising their right to free expression.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/freedom-of-expression>

The right to freedom of expression is particularly important for journalists and other people working in the media. They must be free to criticize the state without fear of prosecution – this is an important feature of a democratic society. However, the media does have to bear in mind other human rights, such as a person's right to respect for their private life.

1. What is the freedom of expression?
2. Why is it important?
3. Do you feel free to express your thoughts?
4. Can it be restricted? Why?

Although you have the freedom to express your views and beliefs, you have a duty to behave responsibly and to respect other people's rights. Public authorities may restrict your right to freedom of expression if they can show that their action has a proper basis in law, and is necessary and 'proportionate' in order to:

- protect national security,
- protect the rights of other people

It may be permissible to restrict your freedom of expression if, for example, you express views that encourage racial or religious hatred.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/the-human-rights-act/>

2008 Press Freedom Rankings Map

